

To: Council

Date: 25 November 2019

Title of Report: Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision – as submitted by the speakers and with written and verbal responses from Cabinet Members

Introduction

1. Addresses made by members of the public to the Council, and questions put to the Cabinet members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below. Any written responses available are also below.
2. The text reproduces that sent in the speakers and represents the views of the speakers. This is not to be taken as statements by or on behalf of the Council
3. This report is republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This lists the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and written and summarised verbal responses.

Addresses and questions to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda.

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Addresses and questions in part 2

1. Question from Mark Franks, Blackbird Leys Parish Councillor - Spindleberry Nature Park

Many of my parishioners have come to me with their concerns about Oxford City Council's plans to build on Spindleberry Nature Park which for some odd reason Oxford City Council think is in Knights Road. Interestingly, at the entrance on Spindleberry Close there is a gate and sign to the park which clearly states "Spindleberry Nature Park Tel 01865 252240", which is the number to Oxford City Council parks department. It is through this gate the parks department use to cut the playing-field area.

The Green Spaces Map Blackbird Leys contained within 'Oxford's Green Space Strategy 2013-2027' document (1) clearly lists the whole of the nature park as a green-space: the wooded area is listed as "green link" and the playing field which includes football pitch, exercise equipment and formally a BMX track is listed as 'park under 2 hectors'.

The current and soon to be superseded local plan lumped half the nature park with the Kassam stadium as potential area for development in an area called SP24a. On the new yet to be adopted 'Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036' page 153 (2), it has a site called "Knights Road" it says is in "Littlemore ward" currently used as "open space" or park in non-Orwellian speech. There is only one Knights Road in the city, which in Northfield Brook ward in Blackbird Leys. Something which I find deeply upsetting as a Blackbird Leys Parish Councillor for the Northbrook Ward, as it shows that city council has no idea where my ward actually is located.

On Page 49 of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy 2012 – 2026 (3), it states "The potential to secure community use at additional sites which currently offer unsecured, adhoc or no community use should be also be explored along with the feasibility of bringing the mini pitch in Spindleberry Park back in to use."

On the current local plan section 'Local Plan 11.0 Sport Outdoor Recreation Community Facilities' (4) page 123, POLICY SR.8 states "The City Council will support the creation of additional allotments where justified by demand. A site is identified at Spindleberry Park, Blackbird Leys to meet the potential need arising from residential development."

On page 120 the Public Open Space section of the current local plan it says "The most popular areas for informal recreation are Oxford's parks, nature parks, historic cemeteries and common land. Each one has a unique character and offers a particular experience that cannot be enjoyed anywhere else. The City Council will protect areas that are used for such purposes."

I find it amazing Oxford City Council has promised to look into reinstating the football pitch, protect open spaces, providing allotments while also concreting over Spindleberry Nature park.

Which is why I am planning to propose a parish poll to Blackbird Leys Parish Council to let my parishioners decide

The question of the poll will be simple:

Do you support protecting the whole of Spindleberry Nature Park from any non-recreational development?

My question to Oxford City Council is:

would it not only accept the result of the non-binding parish poll , but also in the event of the parishioners deciding to keep nature park for recreation use, consider selling the

whole the Spindleberry Nature park to Blackbird Leys Parish council for a 999 year lease for a peppercorn fee?

[Oxford City Council documents referred to \(pdfs\)](#)

- 1) [Green space strategy](#)
- 2) [Local Plan](#)
- 3) [Playing pitch and outdoor sport strategy](#)
- 4) [Local Plan outdoor recreation facilities](#)

Verbal response from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport, Councillor Hollingsworth

This response deals with the planning policy aspects of the question: other matters raised will need to be discussed separately with the relevant service heads.

The Knights Road site, the area adjacent to the Spindleberry nature park, has been allocated for housing development for nearly 10 years. It was allocated in the Sites and Housing Plan (consultation on which began in 2010, with the plan formally adopted in 2013) for residential-led development as part of policy SP24 of that Plan, which covered this site and sites next to the Kassam Stadium; the majority of the overall area was in the Littlemore ward. The Local Plan 2036 proposes to maintain that allocation, but has split the site into two different policy areas, SP15 (Kassam Stadium) and SP16 (Knights Road).

Unfortunately the information box which should have been updated with the correct ward information to show that site SP16, the Knights Road site, is entirely in Northfield Brook was not altered. I'm very sorry for the error, and that will be corrected in the final document.

The Local Plan 2036 and its Policy Map show that Spindleberry Nature Park continues to be protected both as a wildlife site (policy G2) and as part of the green and blue infrastructure network (policy G1).

Both the Sites and Housing Plan and the Local Plan were subject to extensive public consultation. The Sites and Housing plan underwent a thorough public consultation and an examination in public before adoption at a full Council in February 2013.

The City Council followed all the statutory consultation procedures during development of the 2013 Sites and Housing Plan and the current proposed Local Plan. The consultation periods were advertised with significant publicity, including press releases, leafleting of public buildings and posters. Direct contact was made with those on the planning database, which includes all residents' associations and similar bodies, and with all statutory consultation bodies such as the Parish Council, Historic England and the Environment Agency. There was also a leaflet drop to all households in the city.

The Plan is currently under examination by the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State. The Inspectors are appointed to test the soundness of the Plan including whether policies such as the site allocation for the Knights Road site are justified and likely to be effective.

2. Address by Frances Ashworth and Cyril Foster– in support of the motion at 15b (mental health)

I would like to speak to support the mental health motion, especially those parts which relate to CCG underfunding, rationing, lack of access to psychological services and provision in the community including housing. We don't very often talk about the needs of those with severe mental health problems but I know that I speak for many who would like their views put forward.

Personally I speak as someone who has had a number of relatives who have experienced severe mental health difficulties involving psychosis, one of whom is sadly no longer with us as a result. I have been a recent user of secondary mental health services and a relative currently has a schizophrenia diagnosis and is cared for by a community mental health team. And the more you talk to people the more common you will find that this experience is. Many people cope with severe and enduring mental health conditions all their lives, some better than others and there are also many family carers who are put in the position of having far too much responsibility for the welfare of their family members – some even being overtly told that, in the absence of enough skilled staff time, they can be the only people keeping their loved ones out of hospital.

I am a Trustee for Rethink Mental Illness, the national charity run by and for people with experience of severe mental illness and am chair of its South East Regional Committee so have very wide experience of talking to people who experience severe mental illness and of surveys and research in this area.

I also act as Group Coordinator for a group called Rethink Oxford Campaigners which meets just off the Cowley Road. We are a group of people with direct experience of severe mental illness. When we set ourselves up 5 years ago we had a meeting to determine our priorities. The room was packed and the priorities were: Access to the right help at the right time including psychological therapy and access to Care Coordinators and support generally. It seemed then that the more ill you were the more difficult it was to access the right help and this has not changed. Some three years later we did a survey amongst the 200 or so people on our email list and the major problem was access to staff, not getting appointments and staff moving on causing breaks in care. Last year we contributed to the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act from our own joint experience and we found that some of us had been sectioned into hospital on reaching crises which should have been avoidable with proper care in the community. Sometimes being sent to hospitals many miles away (eg from Oxford to London, from Witney to Windsor) And then in hospital not being listened to and sometimes being discharged with no housing to go to, so inevitably ending up back in hospital. Hospital is very expensive compared with proper community care and causes additional trauma.

Last week we had a meeting to discuss action points for a new government and agreed that the fundamental problem was ironically a lack of regard for people's welfare. We are in favour of a cross-governmental approach with shows some kindness and understanding; often people do not know where to go for help and are actually advised to go to A and E in these circumstances.

We feel strongly that individual clinicians are not at fault and are very often extremely caring and professional. But administrative convenience and cost-cutting is put above the wellbeing of individuals. A therapeutic relationship cannot be nurtured if staff have to move on.

Even worse is the experience of those who rely on the Community Mental Health Teams. Besides staff turnover (leading to many changes of Care Coordinator with gaps in between and missed appointments because of this) it is much more difficult for people with very severe mental illness to gain access to psychological therapies, much

more reliance being put upon medication. They are also deemed too ill for IAPT, the service to which you can refer yourself, so they wait marooned in the middle and risk getting worse. In some places in the area there have also been a series of locum psychiatrists for years now and long gaps between appointments.

There is also the very common experience that, in order to save resources, people are discharged from Community Mental Health Teams to their GPs when they are still very ill on the pretext that they are not engaging. A symptom of schizophrenia is an unwillingness to engage. GPs will readily say that they do not understand anti-psychotic medication, which is all the treatment a lot of people are offered. On paper there is the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership which should bring together aspects of health and social care – but in practice on the increasingly rare occasions when people meet with their clinical care teams there is not the time to discuss access to what is needed or plan properly.

And access to all this stops in any case with premature discharge.

The Rethink Mental Illness report “Right Treatment, Right Time” covers the difficulties of obtaining the right treatment across the country and also makes the point that the more ill you are the more difficult it is to access the right help. Its analysis of spending by CCGs and its analysis of the use of co-production by CCGs (ie involving those who actually use the services in their design) consistently shows that Oxfordshire has been underspending and underperforming.

I should say that I now know many people who have been diagnosed with a severe and enduring mental health condition who, with the right care and given reasons to be hopeful about their future, have made very good recoveries and some are doing important jobs.

Letting people go into crisis because of lack of funds is like standing by while people have the first symptoms of a heart attack, not supporting them with the right housing is asking for a relapse to happen. Discharging them when you know they are still ill is playing with fire.

I urge you to support the motion.

Verbal response from the Cabinet Member for Healthy Oxford, Councillor Upton

Thank you for your speech in support of the motion later on the agenda. Thank you for sharing your stories with us: it is only when we hear the experiences of people living with these illnesses that the statistics become meaningful. While this council is not responsible for mental health services, we can have an impact on these through our partnerships. We have raised an Oxford weighting for NHS staff with the NHS Trusts. We are working through different programmes (eg Trailblazer, and two mental health workers in the Housing Services team) to help people secure and keep their homes. It is crucial that we focus on, and encourage others in, encouraging good mental health, and the motion we will debate later helps the council to do that.

3. (a) Address by Safoora Teli – in support of the motion at 15c (Kashmir)

3 (b) Address by Fayaz Khan – in support of the motion at 15c (Kashmir)

Address by Safoora Teli

Dear Lord Mayor, respected Councillors and all present here today, good evening. I am really grateful for this opportunity to talk about Kashmir, the place of my heritage and to share some insight today.

For the past 9 years, I have worked with and advocated for vulnerable people, many of them asylum seekers and refugees. I currently work in Oxford, supporting those in this city who have been recognised as potential victims of human trafficking. I've heard first-hand accounts of the disturbances, tragedies and desperate circumstances that push people to leave their homes and countries. The unrest in Kashmir is no exception; with an Oxford businessman recently telling me about his insomnia and anxiety, describing the ways in which he is trying to assist his younger brothers to leave Kashmir to go somewhere, anywhere safer. This is a concern shared by many as since August 4th this year- thousands of young men and boys have been victims of arbitrary arrest and detention, picked up as they try to go about their daily routine or during targeted raids in the middle of the night – and many tell harrowing stories and show evidence of torture in prison. The continued indiscriminate use of pellet guns on protestors too has injured, blinded and killed many young people and children.

Since the sudden revocation of article 370 (which protected its semi-autonomous special status), Kashmir has entered a new chapter of anxiety and disarray - with internet services still completely blocked, and only partial reinstatement of some mobile phones in recent weeks- there have been major impacts on the running of and supplies to schools, hospitals, pharmacies, shops and businesses. The UN has repeatedly urged India to exercise restraint in Kashmir, with a spokesperson recently expressing concern at the impact of the current curfew on the right to peaceful assembly, freedom of political expression, access to education and health. As with most societies blighted by humanitarian crises and war, it is the vulnerable that are doubly affected. Children have not been to school for almost 4 months, and the elderly and unwell have been dying premature deaths from otherwise manageable illnesses. The British Medical Journal described the situation as having led to a 'blatant denial of the right to healthcare'.

A spokesperson of the ruling political party in India recently tried to make the justification that "the life of a citizen is more important than civil liberties". As someone with all of my extended family in Kashmir, and having visited many times since childhood- these words are hollow and frankly laughable. Because for 30 years now Kashmiris have been living in a state of martial law. 1989 was when the extreme militarisation of the valley began, leading to the current ratio of approximately 8 civilians to each Indian soldier. Due to so-called emergency powers in place that ensure impunity for actions of the military (namely the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and the Public Safety Act) - there has been almost 100,000 killings, more than 8000 disappearances, numerous mass graves of unidentified bodies, thousands of reports of torture, the extensive use of mass rape as a weapon of war as well as arbitrary arrest, detention and destruction of property. These have been diligently documented by local human rights and civil society groups working tirelessly in the valley. International organisations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the Red Cross have consistently been denied access to Kashmir.

The UN, Members of the European parliament and others have begun to speak out. As a city that values and encourages diversity and discourse, Oxford taking a stand today to seek justice and accountability for Kashmiris would be a most fitting and commendable move.

Address by Fayaz Khan

Speech on Kashmir Issue

Lord Mayor, distinguished Councillors and respected participants-GOOD Evening. It is a great honour for me to address this Session of the august Council of the city of Oxford and to bring to your kind attention the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Jammu and Kashmir.

The persistent crisis in Kashmir has not only endangered peace in Kashmir and the region but it is a continuous cause of disturbance for British Kashmiris and Pakistanis residing here in Oxford UK. Being a student of diplomatic studies, I consider dialogue and diplomacy is the only way to resolve this conflict, but unfortunately India wrongly considers it a bilateral issue and refuses to negotiate anything related to Kashmir. I strongly feel that the involvement of international community is indispensable to ask India to pay heed to the wishes of Kashmiris and resolve the issue in accordance with UN resolutions, as rightly highlighted in the motion put forward by Altaf Khan.

More than 100 days have passed since India imposed strict curfew in Jammu and Kashmir thus depriving eight million innocent men, women and children from their basic fundamental human right : all educational institutions are closed, people have no access to internet/social media to maintain contact with the outside world or to inquire about their family members, all sorts of political activities are banned, Political leaders including former Chief Ministers of Jammu and Kashmir are detained without any charge or trial- all these illegal actions by the Indian government reflect utter disrespect for democratic and constitutional norms.

Respected Councillors, the prevalent systematic oppression and injustice in Jammu & Kashmir has caught the attention of the global community and International Organizations. The office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations has called for the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry to investigate gross human rights violations in Kashmir in its recent report and rightly demanded in the motion put forward by Deputy Lord Mayor Altaf Khan- which I support. Similarly, the public hearing on human rights in occupied Jammu and Kashmir was held by the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission of the U.S. Congress on 14 November 2019 at Washington DC. The deliberations of the Commission reinforced internationally recognized disputed nature of the Jammu and Kashmir issue and highlighted gross human rights violations taking place in Indian Occupied Kashmir.

I request this august house, which is well known for upholding the principles of human rights, rule of law and justice across the globe, to help the oppressed people of Indian occupied Kashmir by supporting this motion and becoming their voice.

I would also like to request you all to write a letters to your MPs, as demanded in this motion, to bring this matter to the kind attention of higher leadership and international organizations to put pressure on the government of India to revoke the unilateral decision and allow the people of Jammu and Kashmir to decide their future in accordance with their wishes and free will.

To conclude, I thank you all for honouring me by addressing this Council of the great people of Great Britain.

Verbal response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Brown

Thank you for your speech in support of the motion later on the agenda. We are really concerned about the situation in Kashmir ad it is important for our Kashmiri residents that we raise these issues. We will be debating the motion on this later in the meeting.

4. Question by Judith Harley – Greyhound stadium

Lord Mayor, Councillors,

This month several issues of the Oxford Mail have reported on the significant support given by Oxford City Council to the prospect of reviving the Oxford Greyhound Stadium in Blackbird Leys. On 2nd November the Oxford Mail stated that the Council has “produced a new report exploring how it could help a private company or charity bring the much missed stadium back into use as a leisure facility”, and on 15th November Councillor Hollingsworth is reported as saying that, if the current owners of the stadium do not co-operate with Council plans to bring it back into use, then the Council would be prepared to ask for a Government Compulsory Purchase Order to force a sale to revive the stadium and save it from destruction.

I have addressed Council several times in the last two years over the William Morris Sports Ground in Temple Cowley, because residents value this as a protected open space and wish to see it returned in its entirety to public use for open air sport and informal leisure activities. I have twice asked the Council to make a compulsory purchase order for this site, to bring it back into use for leisure and recreation. On both occasions the Council has declined, citing not using taxpayers’ money, but has never suggested the “facilitator” rescue route offered to the stadium.

Why is there such a difference in attitude from the Council in reviving the Greyhound Stadium yet destroying the William Morris Sports Field? Both are much missed leisure facilities, now in private ownership, and closed by their owners. In both cases residents wish the current landowners would re-open the sites for public use. Both could be run by a private company or charity for public benefit. For the Greyhound Stadium the City Council is prepared to undertake a “facilitating role” with a development partner or leisure operator and, if the owner is unwilling to co-operate, “use compulsory purchase powers to buy the site to enable a third party operator to bring the facility back into use”. Why not do this for the William Morris Sports Ground? The City Council is even writing a special policy into Local Plan 2036 to bring the stadium back into use, to prevent its permanent loss, whereas the William Morris Sports Ground has no such protection.

Councillor Hollingsworth is quoted as saying “Oxford Stadium is a valuable community asset”. **We feel the same about the William Morris Sports Ground, which is a gift and legacy from William Morris, Lord Nuffield, to his workers at the local car factory and to the local community.**

Why won’t the Council offer a similar “facilitator” rescue for this site, and ask for a Government Compulsory Purchase Order to assist revival of the William Morris Sports Ground, and **preserve this heritage asset as a tribute to Lord Nuffield and his philanthropy and beneficence?**

Written response from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport, Councillor Hollingsworth

The Oxford Stadium is the only stadium of its type in the city, is within a conservation area and is a designated heritage asset. None of these apply to the former cricket pitch at William Morris Close, which is why the Local Plan proposes different planning policy approaches to the two sites. The former pitch at William Morris Close is being replaced and the scheme offers new public open space for the local community. This approach is also being taken elsewhere in the city for other allocations in the local plan relating to other sports pitches where they can be consolidated in the locality.

The special circumstances for Oxford Stadium require a different approach, which is what the Council is proposing in the Local Plan.

5. Address by Judith Harley – Rules on lobbying councillors

Lord Mayor, Councillors,

According to **section 24.8, Lobbying, in the Planning Code of Practice in the latest City Council Constitution (July 2019)**, “ ... ***Councillors should not lobby each other on planning applications, nor should they put pressure on officers to make a particular recommendation or do anything which compromises, or is likely to compromise, the officers’ impartiality or professional integrity.***”

Surely this prohibition, especially on lobbying each other, thwarts and compromises the ability of councillors to inform other members of concerns from ward residents over unsuitable and inappropriate developments in their ward. With this veto in place, and the threat of being reported to the Standards Committee for councillors who breach this section, accidentally or otherwise, how can councillors perform their obligations to represent their constituents and their constituents’ views?

Section 24.23 of the Constitution, Responsibility for this code, identifies that “ ... ***the Head of Planning Services and the Monitoring Officer have overall responsibility for this code. They will review how the code is working.***”

I would suggest that **section 24.8 of the code is not working** as it prevents **MY** ward councillors – and everyone else’s – from representing and discussing my views, and those of other residents, with their colleagues when it comes to dealing with planning applications. **This is quite extraordinary, inappropriate, and most unreasonable. Please will Council revise section 24.8 of the Constitution to remove this ban on lobbying on planning applications.**

As the Head of Planning Services and the Monitoring Officer have been identified as having overall responsibility for this code, please will Council ask them to make the appropriate amendments, and remove the threat of reporting to the Standards Committee any councillor who discusses a planning application with their colleagues.

Thank you.

Verbal response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Brown

The Monitoring Officer has produced a note for all councillors, which sets out her advice on this matter. The Planning Code of Practice is there to ensure that councillors carry out their planning roles correctly. The distinction is drawn between making representations to the planning officer to be considered in the normal way; and directly lobbying each other (which is not appropriate).

6. Address to be heard at the meeting.

This address about a local issue is from a candidate for the Oxford East parliamentary seat in the general election.

He can speak at Council but under the purdah restrictions this speech is not published or broadcast until after the general election.